



Bright ON!

Vitamin C is your secret weapon for healthier, smoother and glowier skin. Here's how to add this 'it' ingredient to your skin-care routine
By Julia McEwen

Vitamin C can do more than help kick that pesky cold! It's a clinically proven and effective ingredient that you can (and should) add to your skin-care routine. With millions of searches for vitamin C on Google in 2020, it's ranked as the buzziest – and most investigated – beauty ingredient of the year. But what's causing all the hype and why do stars like Jennifer Aniston, Kylie Jenner and Alessandra Ambrosio swear by serums laced with this powerhouse nutrient? The answer is simple: it works.

It's often referred to as the holy grail of skin-care ingredients and that's in large part because vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant. "Our environment is constantly bombarding us with things that can generate oxidation. Whether it's UV rays, cigarette smoke, pollution or infrared light it eventually damages cells, causing premature aging," says Dr. Vincent Richer, a medical and cosmetic dermatologist at Pacific Derm, based in Vancouver. He explains that when antioxidants are topically applied, they help the body shut down the highly reactive molecules known as free radicals that cause oxidative stress. Over time, they can damage the skin, leading to chronic inflammation, which, in turn, can cause collagen to break down.

Beyond acting as a bodyguard against those nasty free radicals, vitamin C "reduces the appearance of the signs of aging such as fine lines, wrinkles, discoloration and sun spots," says Art Pellegrino, head of research and development at RoC Skincare.

Plus, it helps boost radiance and improve skin texture. But while it's touted as a wonder ingredient by numerous companies, "not all vitamin C is created equal," notes Dr. Richer. He explains it's an "unstable" molecule, meaning it oxidizes and dissipates easily, so finding the right formula is paramount to reaping its benefits.

Pick Your Potion

Vitamin C can do a lot for our skin but the type selected determines how much you'll get out of it. Dr. Richer advises paying close attention to the list of ingredients: it should read as ascorbic or L-ascorbic acid, which is the active version of vitamin C. Look for a concentration of 10 to 20 per cent – "Your skin has a maximum potency that it can absorb," says Art. Although it's a safe ingredient for most skin types, the higher the percentage, the greater risk of irritation, especially if you're prone to sensitivity.

A serum will give you the most bang for your buck. It's lightweight and is the most efficient way to deliver vitamin C (or any ingredient) into your skin, because serums can handle higher concentrations and penetrate faster. Plus, serums have smaller particles, which penetrate at a deeper cellular level. However, those with sensitive or dry skin might prefer a vitamin C moisturizer because of its thicker formula, which creates a physical barrier and helps locks in hydration.

Double Time

Adding ingredients like vitamin E, ferulic acid or silymarin (milk thistle extract) into your vitamin C concoction can supercharge its potency, says Dr. Richer. "Vitamin C's effectiveness increases when combined with other antioxidants – they basically have a synergistic effect. They can either help stabilize each other or increase its performance against free-radical damage." This is why you'll very often find two antioxidants formulated together in serums, such as SkinCeuticals' legendary C E Ferulic. The brand recently launched Silymarin CF, ideal for those prone to acne and breakouts.

Best Practices

Truth be told, vitamin C can be high-maintenance. "This ingredient can easily degrade," says Art, explaining that it has a sensitivity to light and air. Your serum should be colourless or have a straw-like tint. If it does oxidize, it turns yellow or brown but it's still safe to use, it just becomes less potent. To combat oxidization, look for opaque or tinted containers that are either air-restrictive or airtight. Store in a cupboard or drawer and once open, use until finished. Dr. Richer says three months is a good benchmark.

There are no hard-and-fast rules about what time of day to use vitamin C products, but adding them to your morning routine makes the most sense because they help boost protection from UV radiation, which is at its highest during the day. If you're using a serum, you'll want to apply it to freshly cleansed skin before your moisturizer and finish with sunscreen.

Now that you know all about this skin-care all-star – and the best ways to reap its benefits – what are you waiting for? Get glowing! **H**

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Laneige Radian-C Cream With Vitamin C, \$46, sephora.ca



Belif Aqua Bomb Brightening Vitamin C Cream, \$48, sephora.ca



SkinCeuticals Silymarin CF, \$190, skinceuticals.ca

Glow Getters

These powerful vitamin C serums and creams seriously work wonders



RoC Multi Correction Revive + Glow Daily Serum, \$44, at drugstores and mass-market retailers



Biossance Squalane + 10% Vitamin C Dark Spot Serum, \$82, sephora.ca



Garnier Green Labs Brightening Serum Cream Pinea-C SPF 30, \$23, at drugstores and mass-market retailers



AlumierMD EverActive C&E + Peptide, \$179, alumiermd.ca

